

Message Text

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S VISIT TO SOUTHERN PROVINCES

SUMMARY: AN AIRGRAM HAS BEEN DRAFTED ON THE AMBASSADOR'S VISIT TO 6 PROVINCIAL CAPITALS IN SOUTHERN ITALY, BUT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE WORTH REPORTING THE HIGHLIGHTS BY TELEGRAM WHILE C&R TRANSMITTERS IDLE AWAY TONIGHT. THE SEVEN DAY VISIT CAME AT A VERY PROPITIOUS TIME AND SERVED TO (A) REASSURE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND PARTICULARLY YOUNG LEADERS IN THE AREA OF OUR STRONG WISH TO CONTINUE TRADITIONAL FRIENDLY TIES WITH ITALY, (B) CONFIRM FIRST HAND AND EXPAND UPON THE AMBASSADOR'S EPOCA MAGAZINE INTERVIEW AND (C) ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE WITH ALL CONCERNED ON WORLD ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS CORRUPTION AND MALADMINISTRATION IN GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

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1. IN ALL OF THE AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, CHURCH AND YOUNG LEADERS IN THE 6 PROVINCES VISITED BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 17 AND SEPTEMBER 23 (BARI, TARANTO, BRINDISI, LECCE, POTENZA, MATERA), THE AMBASSADOR SUCCEEDED IN PERSUADING ALL CONCERNED OF THE STRONG U.S. DESIRE TO MAINTAIN AND DEEPEN OUR TRADITIONAL FRIENDLY RELATIONS AND OF ITS INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEZZOGIORNO AND OF ITALY IN GENERAL.

2. IN DIRECT, CLEAR AND SIMPLE LANGUAGE (ALL IN ITALIAN) THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THE ECONOMIC RECESSION, EXACERBATED BY THE OIL CRISIS, WHICH HAS PLAYED HAVOC WITH THE ECONOMIES OF ALL
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NATIONS OF THE FREE WORLD AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE

PENDULUM WAS NOW SWINGING TOWARD RECOVERY. HE SAID THIS WAS ALREADY THE CASE IN THE UNITED STATES, AND EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT THE U.S. RECOVERY WOULD BENEFIT COUNTRIES SUCH AS ITALY THRU INCREASED EXPORTS TO THE U.S., CITING SHOES AS A PRIME EXAMPLE. THE AMBASSADOR PREDICTED AN UPTURN IN THE ITALIAN ECONOMY IN 6 TO 12 MONTHS. IN EVERY DISCUSSION HE UNDERLINED THE AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL OF SOUTHERN ITALY AND PARTICULARLY OF THE FERTILE PUGLIA REGION WHICH COULD BECOME A "BREAD BASKET" FOR ITALY. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO REGISTERED THE VIEW THAT ITALY COULD BE THE "JAPAN OF EUROPE" IF IT

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WERE NOT SO HAMPERED BY WORKER ABSENTEEISM, LABOR STRIKES AND GENERAL UNREST. THESE OBSERVATIONS AND REMARKS, COMING FROM A SELF-MADE MAN --WHOSE PARENTS WERE BORN IN ITALY--, 3-TERM GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS AND CABINET MEMBER, MADE A DEEP IMPRESSION ON THOSE WHO HEARD HIM DIRECTLY OR READ THE LOCAL NEWSPAPERS, WHOSE COVERAGE WAS EXTENSIVE AND FAVORABLE.

4. IN POTENZA, THE AREA WHERE MINISTER OF THE TREASURY COLOMBO HAS HIS SEAT OF POWER, A SPECIAL MEETING WAS ARRANGED WITH 50 YOUNG POLITICAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERS WHO HAIL FROM POTENZA AND THE SURROUNDING PROVINCES. IN THE FREE AND WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION OF ISSUES, THE COMMENTS BY THE YOUNG LEADERS PROVIDED THE AMBASSADOR WITH MANY FRESH INSIGHTS INTO SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS THE AGING AND LETHARGIC CD LEADERSHIP, THE DISARRAY IN WHICH THE PARTY FINDS ITSELF AND THE DIFFICULTY OF INJECTING YOUNG ENERGETIC LEADERS INTO THE SYSTEM. FOR HIS PART, THE AMBASSADOR WAS ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE BACKGROUND BEHIND THE EPOCA INTERVIEW, I.E., THE 38 ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE ITALIAN PRESS IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS ALLUDING TO A CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PCI IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT.

5. THE AMBASSADOR'S VISIT TO THE 39TH BARI TRADE FAIR WHERE WE SAW

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MANY OF THE 3,000 EXHIBITS FROM 80 FOREIGN COUNTRIES (INCLUDING 42 OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT PRESENTATIONS) AND 5,000 FROM ITALY ITSELF, MADE THE U.S. CONSPICUOUS BY THE ABSENCE OF AN OFFICIAL AMERICAN UNCLASSIFIED

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PRESENCE. MINISTER ANDREOTTI, WHO IS ALSO IN CHARGE OF THE FUND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT FOR SOUTHERN ITALY, REGISTERED THE STRONG HOPE THAT THE U.S. WOULD BE REPRESENTED AT NEXT YEAR'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY FAIR.

6. AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY, INCLUDING THE SPEECHES HE MADE AT DINNERS SPONSORED BY ROTARY AND OTHER CLUBS IN BRINDISI AND TARANTO, THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THE NEED FOR HONESTY AND INTEGRITY ON THE PART OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND SAID THEY SHOULD ALWAYS KEEP THE NEEDS OF

THE PEOPLE IN MIND IN CARRYING OUT THEIR PUBLIC DUTIES. IT IS
SIGNIFICANT THAT THIS AND OTHER REFERENCES TO THE NEED TO ELIMINATE
INEFFICIENCY, GRAFT AND CORRUPTION ALWAYS DREW THE GREATEST APPLAUSE.
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